



# Media Release

From Victorian Canine Association Inc  
trading as DOGS Victoria

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## Puppies at Play

*How puppies play with each other  
and how to keep children and puppies safe when playing together*

“From play, puppies learn how far they can go in their social interaction with other dogs and humans. Puppies need to learn body language signals from other dogs and cause and effect responses of their behaviour in their play,” explains Puppies at Play host of the Melbourne Pet & Animal Expo, Dearn Jackson.

All puppies use their mouth like humans use their hands so mouthing and biting is a common behaviour among all types of puppies. This is a good time to teach your puppy that biting its toys is ok but biting people is not.

“Puppies need to be taught what is acceptable, just like human children,” said DOGS Victoria President Peter Frost. “The ideal time to train puppies on acceptable play, and socialise them to cope in an urban human world is between 8-16 weeks of age. This is also the age at which most breeders allow a pup to be taken from its litter.”

“There are differences between breeds of dog,” says Ms Jackson. “Working or herding breeds such as Border Collies, sight hounds like Salukis and retrieving breeds like Labradors are more sight-orientated in their play. They will want to chase, catch, bump, shake, grab, tug and even try to ‘round up’ their toys.

Hound and terrier types will be much more scent-orientated wanting to explore, smell and dig more independently.”

Humans need to learn to read the signals of their dog from an earlier age and encourage appropriate types of play to ensure they end up with a well-socialised adult dog that will be a joy to have around other humans and dogs.

Mr Frost offered puppy owning families the following tips:

- NEVER leave children unattended with a puppy or a dog
- Always have children play with a puppy with a toy that is large enough to keep their hands away from its mouth, but still the right size for the size of the dog

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- If the puppy bites, say “ouch” and immediately end the play session so that it learns that if it bites the fun is over
- Don’t let children play tug-of-war with a puppy or dog
- Know the way that your dog likes to play as it differs among types of dogs
- Give the puppy short play sessions frequently rather than one long session which can tire them out too much
- If in doubt, contact your vet, an animal behaviourist or trainer to find out the amount of time and types of games that are best for your dog

Finally, keep in mind that puppies will get plenty of exercise from playing. It is still a good idea to walk your puppy, however, to get him used to being on a lead and dealing with every day issues like bicycles, skateboards, posties on motorbikes, wheelchairs, walking frames, and parents with pushers. Your puppy will take a cue from you on how to react to new experiences, so if you remain calm it will do the same.

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